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Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, fo claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended). A protective cover for protection of agricultural products, said protective cover sized to permit said cover to be positioned generally about an associated agricultural product, said cover comprising a fibrous nonwoven fabric formed from fibrous material selected from the group consisting of thermoplastic polymers, ~~thermoset polymers, natural fibers, and combinations thereof~~, and/or polymeric filamentary elements, said fibrous nonwoven fabric including a portion exhibiting the ability to modify the ripening of the agricultural product prior to harvesting, while retarding passage of dust and insects.

Claim 2 (canceled).

Claim 3 (original). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said fibrous nonwoven fabric has basis weight from about 10 to 100 gr/m².

Claim 4 (original). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said fibrous nonwoven fabric comprises polymeric staple length fibers.

Claim 5 (original). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said fibrous nonwoven fabric comprises spunbond polymeric material.

Claim 6 (original). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said cover comprises at least one piece of said fibrous nonwoven fabric, said piece of fibrous nonwoven fabric having at least one edge.

Claim 7 (original). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said piece of fibrous nonwoven fabric having at least one edge further comprises an affixing means selected from the group consisting of adhesives and adhesive tapes, hook and loop fasteners, staples, zippers, snaps, buttons, and ties.

Claim 8 (original). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 6, wherein:

said cover comprises at least one means for affixing the protective cover about an agricultural product.

Claim 9 (original). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said cover comprises at least one piece of said fibrous nonwoven fabric, with at least one seam joining edge portions of said piece of fabric, said seam being formed by at least one of heat-bonding, adhesive bonding, and sewing.

Claim 10 (original). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said fibrous nonwoven fabric further comprises a reinforcing scrim.

Claim 11 (original). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said cover further comprises a porous polymeric film layer.

Claim 12 (original). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said fibrous nonwoven fabric comprise polymeric material incorporating one or more protection-enhancing agents selected from the group consisting of insecticidal, fungicidal, algaecidal, decay-inhibiting, volatile ripening chemistry absorbent, UV-protective, and pigmenting agents.

Claim 13 (previously presented). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 12, wherein

said polymeric material is a thermoplastic polymer, and said protection enhancing agent is a melt-additive in said polymer.

Claim 14 (currently amended). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim ~~10~~ 12, wherein:

said protection enhancing agent comprises a fiber surface treatment for said fibrous nonwoven fabric.

Claim 15 (currently amended). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim ~~10~~ 12, wherein:

said protection enhancing agent comprises a topical treatment applied to said nonwoven fabric.

Claim 16 (currently amended). A protective cover for protection of agricultural products, said protective cover sized to permit said cover to be positioned generally about an associated agricultural product, said cover comprising a fibrous nonwoven fabric formed from fibrous and/or filamentary elements formed from material selected from the group consisting of thermoplastic polymers, said fibrous nonwoven fabric exhibiting the ability to modify the ripening of the agricultural product prior to harvesting while retarding passage of dust and insects, said modification of the ripening of the agricultural product occurring by alteration of the light transmittance in at least one region of the protective cover.

Claim 17 (currently amended). A protective cover for protection of agricultural products, said protective cover sized to permit said cover to be positioned generally about an associated agricultural product, said cover comprising a fibrous nonwoven fabric formed from fibrous and/or filamentary elements formed from material selected from the group consisting of thermoplastic polymers, said fibrous nonwoven fabric exhibiting the ability to modify the ripening of the agricultural product prior to harvesting while retarding passage of dust and insects, said modification of the ripening of the agricultural product occurring by alteration of the venting, sequestering, or transference of volatile ripening chemistries in at least one region of the protective cover.

Claim 18 (currently amended). A method of protecting agricultural products, comprising the steps of:

providing at least one piece of nonwoven fabric formed from fibrous and/or filamentary element formed from material selected from the group consisting of thermoplastic polymers;

forming a sheet from said nonwoven fabric having a finite length and width; modifying at least one region of the nonwoven fabric so as to have an altered level of light transmittance; and

positioning said protective cover generally about an agricultural product to alter the ripening of the agricultural product prior to harvesting and protecting the product from dust and/or insects.

Claim 19 (original). A method of protecting agricultural products in accordance with claim 18, wherein:

said nonwoven fabric comprises heat-bonded, polymeric staple length fibers.

Claim 20 (original). A method of protecting agricultural products in accordance with claim 18, wherein:

said nonwoven fabric comprises hydroentangled staple length fibers.

Claim 21 (original). A method of protecting agricultural products in accordance with claim 18, wherein:

said nonwoven fabric comprises adhesive-bonded fibrous material.

Claim 22 (original). A method of protecting agricultural products in accordance with claim 18, wherein:

said nonwoven fabric comprises substantially continuous polymeric filaments.

Claim 23 (currently amended) A method of protecting agricultural products, comprising the steps of:

providing at least one piece of nonwoven fabric formed from fibrous and/or filamentary element formed from material selected from the group consisting of thermoplastic polymers;

modifying at least one region of the nonwoven fabric so as to have an altered level of light transmittance;

forming a tube from said nonwoven fabric by joining together of edge portions thereof;

cutting said tube to a selected length to form a protective cover; and

positioning said protective cover generally about an agricultural product to protect the product from dust and/or insects.

Claim 24 (original). A method of protecting agricultural products in accordance with claim 14, wherein:

said tube-forming step includes joining edge portions of said piece of nonwoven fabric by at least one of heat bonding, adhesive bonding, and sewing.

Claim 25 (currently amended). A method of protecting agricultural products, comprising the steps of:

providing at least one piece of nonwoven fabric formed from fibrous and/or
filamentary element formed from material selected from the group consisting of
thermoplastic polymers;

forming a sheet from said nonwoven fabric having a finite length and width;
modifying at least one region of the nonwoven fabric so as to have an altered level
of venting, sequestering, or transference of volatile ripening chemistries; and
positioning said protective cover generally about an agricultural product to alter
the ripening of the agricultural product prior to harvesting and protecting the product from
dust and/or insects.

Claim 26 (currently amended). A method of protecting agricultural products,
comprising the steps of:

providing at least one piece of nonwoven fabric formed from fibrous and/or
filamentary element formed from material selected from the group consisting of
thermoplastic polymers;

modifying at least one region of the nonwoven fabric so as to have an altered level
of venting, sequestering, or transference of volatile ripening chemistries;

forming a tube from said nonwoven fabric by joining together of edge portions
thereof;

cutting said tube to a selected length to form a protective cover; and
positioning said protective cover generally about an agricultural product to protect
the product from dust and/or insects.